

Women on the Waterfront Oral History Project
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SEATTLE PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

INTERVIEWEE: MARY FULLER

INTERVIEWERS: ALISON STEICHEN

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[00:00:00] **ALISON:** It is May 8 [2025]. This is Allison Steichen for the Women of the Waterfront Oral History Project. I'm here with Mary Fuller. Please state your name, registration number and the local.

[00:00:31] **MARY:** Mary Fuller, 56889, Local 19, Seattle.

[00:00:39] **ALISON:** When's your birthday? Where were you born?

[00:00:42] **MARY:** September 18, 52. I was born in Seattle.

[00:00:48] **ALISON:** Where were your parents from?

[00:00:51] **MARY:** Both my parents were Canadian. They migrated down here in about 1950, and then my dad eventually took out his papers to be a citizen. My mom never did.

[00:01:08] **ALISON:** Were they involved with the union?

[00:01:10] **MARY:** No growing up. I had no clue what a longshoreman was. I had no clue, really, what a union was. I knew one Black girl at school. I didn't really even know her, but that's the only Black person we had at school, was one.

[00:01:27] **ALISON:** Where did you go to school?

[00:01:28] **MARY:** Shoreline High School, and we're Seattle, close.

[00:01:34] **ALISON:** What kind of politics did your parents hold? Were there union values in the home?

[00:01:38] **MARY:** No, they really didn't-- I don't remember them getting into politics. You know, my dad, he worked all the time. My mom eventually went and started working after the kids were older. But I don't remember them talking about politics.

[00:01:54] **ALISON:** What work did they do?

[00:01:56] **MARY:** My dad was an electronic technician. And my mother, she worked at Shoreline Community College, and she was a painter. She painted the stripes on the basketball court. [laughs]

[00:02:13] **ALISON:** What was-- So Shoreline High School, what was your youth look like? Activities, hobbies...

[00:02:20] **MARY:** Oh, dear. Pretty much normal for then, you know. We had to walk to school, didn't matter how far. We used to walk to school, up hills both ways. High school, I wasn't really into high school, even though I did go, but I got pregnant when I was in my-- before my senior year, and so I went to an unwed mother's home. But I did graduate with my class, 1980, or 1970, and so I had Donna in April, and then I graduated in June 1970. But I gave her up for adoption, but we are good friends now.

[00:03:10] **ALISON:** That's nice. Do you have other children?

[00:03:13] **MARY:** My son Danny. He's a longshoreman, also, he was born in '86. And a little something here: Donna, born April 10, 1970; Danny, born April 10, 1986. About two hours difference in time of birth. So I've got twins.

[00:03:35] **ALISON:** And Danny's in Local 19?

[00:03:38] **MARY:** Local 19.

[00:03:40] **ALISON:** How did you get into the waterfront then, you're first generation?

[00:03:44] **MARY:** Well, I went to Shoreline Community College, and I couldn't get a grant for my third year, so I had to go to work. So I went through an agency, and I got a job at Williams Diamond. Williams Diamond is the agent for Mitsui O.S.K. Lines. And in doing that job, I worked very closely with the Port of Seattle. And so after three and a half years of being at Williams Diamond, the Port of Seattle, Frank Clark-- I don't know if you know who he is, he's gone now, but he was a big-wig at the port-- He says, "Mary, apply for this job. You've got it." And so I did, and I got the job, and I was a clerk at the Port of Seattle. I waited on the truck drivers coming

in. I worked at [Terminal] 102 I worked at [Terminal] 18, when they had a CFS [Container Freight Station] , and eventually they wanted me to go to Pier 66 and I said no. And just about that time, that's when 1980 came around, and the guys knew they were going to have to take women. And I was at 102 at the time, and they came to me, and they say, "Mary, apply for this job. If we have to have women, we want to pick them."

[00:04:57] **ALISON:** So you were hand selected.

[00:04:58] **MARY:** Yeah. And then, well, because when I worked at the port, I used to do some really slippery shit for them. [laughs]

[00:05:07] **ALISON:** Slippery?

[00:05:08] **MARY:** Well, I was the go-between them and Customs.

[00:05:12] **ALISON:** So more, just to make the operation--

[00:05:14] **MARY:** The container came in. It's supposed to have 550 cartons in it, it's only got 540, and it's only been sitting there for two days. I'm the one that has to go to Customs and say, "Oh, this is over, short, and damaged here, and it came in short five cartons, which I know exactly where those gardens went: out the door." But I-- yes, I did. I should have gotten fired, but I never got caught, so...

[00:05:47] **ALISON:** Keep the operation running.

[00:05:48] **MARY:** Yeah, well.

[00:05:51] **ALISON:** So they hand selected you to apply for the Port of Seattle and to apply as one of the first women for ILWU [International Longshore and Warehouse Union] ?

[00:05:56] **MARY:** No. They, for longshore, to get into to the B [card] pool. And at the time, when I got in the B pool, May 24, 1980, I worked one shift, one check shift. And the week previous to that, I had took a week off in between the port and longshoring.

[00:06:19] And so when I got out there on the ship, and they says, "Well, okay, you're gonna lash." I'm gonna go, "Okay, what is it?"

[00:06:27] "Well, we need turnbuckles. We need shackles."

[00:06:29] I said, "Show me a turnbuckle. I'll go get them." So they have to show me the turnbuckle, says, "We need fifty-five of these." You know, I was like the runner, and that's a hard job.

[00:06:38] **ALISON:** That's almost harder than lashing, yeah.

[00:06:39] **MARY:** Yeah. But I couldn't-- the three high pulls, at the beginning I could do it, but after a while, it's just too much for me.

[00:06:50] **ALISON:** Did you like being on a ship?

[00:06:51] **MARY:** I did, but [sighs] it was so different back then. I mean, everybody knows Kristi [Hagen] . Kristi loved lashing, I hated lashing. I didn't mind checking, she hated checking. So she'd take a checking job, I'd take a lashing job, and we'd switch.

[00:07:13] **ALISON:** Oh, nice.

[00:07:15] **MARY:** Yeah. And here at lunchtime, here goes Christy. She's done. I said, "Wait, Kris, come here. You gotta come and do your job, now!" She says, "No way!" as she's out the gate. [laughs] But we we did that back then, you guys probably couldn't get away with switching jobs now.

[00:07:32] **ALISON:** Not as much. When I when I first started, we did a little bit more. To talk about that a little bit, when I first started, I was in the first lottery, and I got processed in 2008, and you are one of the people I remember that interviewed me. It was tripartite, and you were the representative for the clerks. And I remember thinking, oh my gosh, there's a woman on this committee, which had to have been rare.

[00:07:57] **MARY:** Dana Montez and me. We were the two, her from [Local] 19, me from [Local] 52, we were the two that used to go up to up by the Coast Guard, and we would teach the new ID's about the waterfront, the written-- I mean, not the written part, but the talking part. The PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] would do a little bit, and then Dana, and then me, and I would tell them what the checkers expected. "When you got on the job, this is what you need to do. You need to have your own pencil." I couldn't stress that more. [laughs]

[00:08:37] **ALISON:** I remember that, I do. I think that was coming from-- I mean, there were more women in when I got in. Obviously, you guys paved the way, but that representation was nice to have that. And then looking out and telling us what we needed to have, not just scaring us and telling us.

[00:08:55] **MARY:** You know, you're gonna get this job, just be prepared. I mean...

[00:08:58] **ALISON:** Yeah. Do you remember what your first day was like, pegging it in on the B side?

[00:09:04] **MARY:** The first day? I don't really-- I was up in the old hall the first time I pegged in. We were still in the old hall, and it was maybe a month later they moved to where we're at now. Up there was very, very intimidating, I mean, very intimidating. I mean, yeah.

[00:09:29] **ALISON:** How is it different?

[00:09:31] **MARY:** Well, I think just for myself, going from that hall to a new one, where I'm new and this is new, okay, I'm part of this now. Whereas the other hall downtown is like, you know, God, am I gonna fit in? Is this what I do? But it was different when I got to Local 19. But there were some times those dispatchers just were asses.

[00:09:59] **ALISON:** Were you treated? How were you treated when you went to peg in at both?

[00:10:06] **MARY:** Oh, I was treated good. I mean, I had no problem, because I just did what the guys did. But there were a few times when the dispatchers-- and I know they're playing games, and they're giving these guys these jobs, and these guys these jobs, especially in the pool. They found out that I had gotten my [?combination?] license, and that's a first. I was the only woman, only woman to drive hook transfer over the road. So I-- Well, what I did is to say, "Sign me a waiver." I went and I took the test, written test, 98% passed, you know. So I have my license, never driven a truck. Dispatchers found out. They brought the hook transfer pad out. Says "You'll drive hook transfer today, or you'll go home."

[00:10:57] **ALISON:** Just threw you in there.

[00:10:58] **MARY:** I says, "Well, can't I go with somebody and at least try?" And he says, "No, insurance won't pay it. You take that job, or you go home. You're not getting another job." I grabbed that thing and I said, "Fuck it. I'll drive truck." [laughs] And I did.

[00:11:14] **ALISON:** And you did. You made it through the day.

[00:11:16] **MARY:** Oh, yeah. The guys were great. I mean, there was a handful of truck drivers, and they were all great. I mean, they helped me so much. And they were just-- I remember one time, I don't know what the engine was doing, but it was really revving out. And Benny Jeffries comes around the corner. I says, "Benny, what do I do?" He says, "Shut it off." [laughs] Oh, okay, okay!

[00:11:41] **ALISON:** Sounds like Benny.

[00:11:42] **MARY:** Shut it off.

[00:11:43] **ALISON:** Did you do that job a lot, like it was regular?

[00:11:46] **MARY:** Yes, it was a very regular thing, which was kind of nice. And they did run them once in a while at nighttime, which was nice, because we'd have moved so many cans from like four to six to twenty-five, and then we'd go home. And there's maybe five or six of us, it depends on how many cans. We always, I mean, we kept it moving, except for Jim Sweeney. And we always ended up at least picking up one or two of his, but we all went home at the same time. If Jim had only done eight cans and the rest of us had done twelve, then we're not going on until he's got his twelve cans done.

[00:12:24] **ALISON:** Oh, each individual was responsible for--

[00:12:26] **MARY:** For so many. I mean, they say, "Move five, move a hundred cans." There's six drivers, so you figure out how many each person's got to move. And we just, you know, we don't care if he only does five and we do fifteen. We're a lot faster than him.

[00:12:41] **ALISON:** Team effort, nice. Did that job pay more than the others?

[00:12:45] **MARY:** Same way.

[00:12:47] **ALISON:** So it was paid the same as an on-dock semi [truck] ?

[00:12:51] **MARY:** Yeah, I went-- from all the waterfront, farthest I ever went was South Park. In South Park, there was an empty yard that we used to take empty cans to. And then there was one other place that was-- I didn't go very far, but it was still much different than driving in the yard because you are in a big truck. You do have these little idiot cars that cut right in front of you and expect you to stop on a dime.

[00:13:22] **ALISON:** Were there ever any accidents over the years?

[00:13:25] **MARY:** Me?

[00:13:26] **ALISON:** You or the others.

[00:13:28] **MARY:** No, not bad. Well, there was one. I can't even remember who it was, coming out of [Terminal] 46, coming out of 46 at the one that's farthest north. And the driver had to take right and some little

idiot, a car, got on this side of him, in his blind side. So the driver took a right, didn't know the car was there, and went right over the front, right over the engine of it with his back tires.

[00:13:50] **ALISON:** Was that one of the men?

[00:13:53] **MARY:** Yeah.

[00:13:54] **ALISON:** And you never did?

[00:13:55] **MARY:** No, the worst I ever did [laughs] was-- and this is so stupid. I'm heading down East Marginal [Way] towards almost to 46, and there are some trucks coming this way. Well, this one truck going the opposite way turned in a bit, because he had his blinker on. He wanted to turn into there. Well, when you turn that truck a bit, your mirror is out further. We clip mirrors. Now you're coming back into me. I had glass all over me. I made it to 46, I got rid of the cam. I called the shop. I says, "Well, I need another mirror." [laughs] Come on, because I had hit other mirrors. Just sometimes you had to back those cans in, and they were like this close. The fun part was getting the twenty footer in between two forty-five footers and getting them all the way back to the end.

[00:14:51] **ALISON:** You had to put them all the way back?

[00:14:53] **MARY:** You didn't have to, but... [laughs]

[00:14:57] **ALISON:** That took some skill, then, to back all those [trucks] . So you weren't just driving it over the road. You were backing them in and parking them, and jacking them, and all that.

[00:15:07] **MARY:** And turn the crank, and yeah.

[00:15:09] **ALISON:** Oh, wow. That's so-- not only was it a skilled job in driving, but it was physical with turning the crank and doing all that.

[00:15:16] **MARY:** Plus the clutch. It's wasn't automatic. Maybe eighteen years.

[00:15:23] **ALISON:** How many years did you do that? Because they don't-- we don't have that.

[00:15:26] **MARY:** No, they don't have hook transfer now.

[00:15:31] **ALISON:** Okay. Was that--

[00:15:33] **MARY:** I liked it way better driving in the yard because I could get out. And Oscar was kind of the leader, and "Okay, time for break." So we'd all go to this-- he found out of the way spots where nobody could see our trucks and we could park and we'd sit in there for an hour and have coffee. [laughs] But I got the job done.

[00:15:52] **ALISON:** Yeah. Was that your favorite operation, or was there another job you liked better?

[00:15:56] **MARY:** Oh jeez. Well, it's probably like every job down there. You do it and do it over and over and over again, you really get tired of it. And that's the beauty, I think, of the waterfront, is there are so many different jobs. You could do so many things. I mean, I knew I was no good at throwing sacks, but I was really good at driving a truck. You know, it's just-- I enjoyed dispatching at Local 52.

[00:16:31] **ALISON:** Which, you were the first woman dispatcher at Local 52?

[00:16:34] **MARY:** Yeah.

[00:16:35] **ALISON:** Nice.

[00:16:36] **MARY:** And helped get the dispatch changed, because when I first started dispatching, it was Mike, Karen and me, and when you were dispatching, you were on twenty-four hours a day for a week. Twenty-four hours a day. And this is when they had a lot of who-knows. So someone could call you at three o'clock in the morning and want a replacement, you'd have to give a replacement, but you still got to have your butt down in the hall by five to get ready for dispatch at six in the morning. So between Sean and Donald and me, we got it all straightened out, and we ended up getting two night dispatchers and two days dispatchers, and it's still that way now.

[00:17:16] **ALISON:** So you were still on long shifts, but it just wasn't the twenty-four?

[00:17:19] **MARY:** No, because the day shift would be there at six, and the night shift would come in at four. They'd switch papers. And then the night shift, they were supposed to be there, but they never came to the hall. I never came to the hall, either. You could do everything from home, you know, unless it was really necessary. But the day shift, they did have to be there, they would just-- because that's when the orders come in from all the companies and everything. And the nighttime, you don't get any orders unless they're light orders.

[00:17:47] **ALISON:** Did you do days or nights with that, then?

[00:17:49] **MARY:** Yeah, it was nice. Because the daytime you're there. I mean, you look at the hall for a week. And then you go on nights, and you can stay home, but you have to have your phone with you glued to your hip just in case. And then you have two weeks off and you can get on the list.

[00:18:07] **ALISON:** Okay. Did you ever get injured on the job over the years?

[00:18:11] **MARY:** Mhm. I've had three hip replacements, back surgery, ankle surgery, smashed fingers. [pauses] This finger here got stuck in between a truck tire and a cone. As the crane was bringing the container down, the cone was on the container, you know the bomb carts and how they bring the can down, it's supposed to wait, and then you put hand up, and you put the twist lock on? We didn't wait. And it was a good thing it was a tire, because it had just enough give where it didn't break anything.

[00:18:56] **ALISON:** Oh, wow.

[00:18:57] **MARY:** It split it, but it didn't break anything.

[00:19:00] **ALISON:** Lucky. So then you had both fast injuries on the job and degenerative from just working?

[00:19:07] **MARY:** Yeah, I think the back injury was from driving the semis in the yard, the hustlers in the yard. But you know how the insurance is, you just can't say, "Well, over the years, these hustlers hurt my back." So when I was driving strad [straddle truck], I jumped out and come down the ladder of the strad and jumped down onto the cement, and I could-- I felt it go, you know. And I says, "That's it. I can't do this anymore." And that's when, because you have to have an instance to file and say, "This is when it happened."

[00:19:42] **ALISON:** So that was your--

[00:19:43] **MARY:** That was my back. The hips were just I think from me being stupid when I was young, you know, climbing up the side of containers, jumping down from tier to tier. You know, doing stupid stuff that young people do.

[00:20:01] **ALISON:** Did you enjoy the stupid stuff? Was it fun? [laughs]

[00:20:05] **MARY:** I did, yeah.

[00:20:07] **ALISON:** Did you have-- other than the on the road, did you have a group of people that you worked with the most or hung out with outside of work? Did you have little--

[00:20:18] **MARY:** Well, you know, the women, Sandy, Becky, Kristi. Kristi and me were were closer than any of them. Those were usually the core people. But then I did marry Bill, and Bill was a longshoreman. And we got married-- well, we lived together fifteen years, then we got married. But when we first got together, I was-- I had just gotten my A book. This was about '88, because I got my A book in '87. And so that's who I hung out with. I mean, we were best friends, we did everything together. Guys used to ask him, "You mean, you want to work with your wife and then you're going to go home and be with her all night?" And he goes, "Well, yeah," because we'd pick our jobs so we could work at least on the same terminal.

[00:21:15] **ALISON:** Oh, nice. So you would be-- he was a crane operator. And then was that when you were--

[00:21:22] **MARY:** Well, when I was super cargo, I tried to take the ship that he was on. Or, if I was a supervisor, got a supervisor, I tried to get the ship and the gang that he was in. You know, even a checker under the hook. If I had to take a checker to be in Bill's gang, I'd do it.

[00:21:37] **ALISON:** Oh, nice. Did that often work out where you guys could work together?

[00:21:40] **MARY:** Yeah, more so than when I was longshoring, because longshoring, he'd, you know, being a crane operator, they get their jobs first, you know. And then I get, unless I'm first out, get leftovers. And everybody knows, "Oh, Fairbanks is driving. We gotta take that gang. We'll get out early."

[00:22:01] **ALISON:** Nice. Did you ever have any desire to drive crane?

[00:22:05] **MARY:** Oh yes, but I couldn't even break into dispatcher when I was at Local 19. I applied or I ran for dispatcher every year, never got anywhere. That's why when I went to Local 52, one of the guys there says "There will never be a woman dispatcher." [laughs] Oh, you shouldn't have said that to me.

[00:22:31] **ALISON:** And then you made it.

[00:22:32] **MARY:** Yeah. I don't know.

[00:22:38] **ALISON:** Did you ever run for anything else at 19 or just dispatcher?

[00:22:42] **MARY:** At 19? No, because I-- well, I had Danny, too. So I really didn't. It wasn't until I got to Local 52 that-- so I was on LRC [Labor Relations Committee] there, and I was, of course, the dispatcher. I spent a long time. And then, I guess they call them the trainer or whatever, I was the one from Local 52. I went and talked all the new people. And then when they take them on tours around to the different piers, I went with them on that and explained, kind of tried to explain different things to them.

[00:23:21] **ALISON:** Were you the first woman to hold the LRC position for 52 now?

[00:23:25] **MARY:** I don't know. I don't know. I didn't even think about it. I mean, that's the way, the way I was down there. I mean, didn't matter if I was first or last, just as long as I got to try it and do it and see if I liked it, and if I liked it, then, you know, I could do it again. You know, just like driving truck. I don't know how many of the women down there I tried to teach to drive semi in the yard, and they just could not grasp it. And it just, it was beyond my knowledge to think, why don't they get this? But I can tell it's a machine. The machine is going to do what you tell it to do. It's not going to do anything on its own. But they couldn't get it. And I think it just takes a different brain, a mechanical brain or something. I must have that, I don't know.

[00:24:24] **ALISON:** So you did-- you kind of had your own track with the jobs you took, the positions that you held. What else, were there clubs, extracurriculars or things like that? The union family or...

[00:24:46] **MARY:** Well, you know, we used to have a lot of picnics down there at the hall. When Wes Young was there, I was still Local 19, they'd have big picnics down there, which they don't do anymore. Those were always fun. I mean, I always go to the fifth of July picnic, you know. And since I've been president, I go and do the wreath thing. I went up to 91, I think it is, twice, but I go up to Shelby Daffron's grave.

[00:25:22] **ALISON:** So you're the president of the Seattle pensioners club? First woman for that, as well. So how long have you held that position?

[00:25:40] **MARY:** Four or five years.

[00:25:41] **ALISON:** And that's a voted position, as is the dispatcher and LRC, they're all voted in by your peers?

[00:25:50] **MARY:** Mhm. [affirmatively]

[00:25:51] **ALISON:** Okay, what's it like being involved still with the pensioners and the president, and what are those duties like?

[00:26:01] **MARY:** Well, I really like the president Local 19 has now Mark Elverston, he is sharp. He's on, you know, and I think he really, really wants the best for Local 19. We get along fine. Now, Joe Toro is my vice president, and as we all know, Joe Toro is more outspoken than me. I was told at the last meeting I need to grow some balls because I just have a hard time telling people to shut up. But Joe has no problem whatsoever. So you know, he's kind of like, you know, Joe.

[00:26:40] **ALISON:** The vice president?

[00:26:42] **MARY:** Yeah.

[00:26:42] **ALISON:** Okay. What are your activities, politics outside the union?

[00:26:51] **MARY:** Very Democratic, it just makes me cry. I can't turn the TV on anymore, I can't watch the news because it just makes me cry. I haven't gotten involved in politics, except through the union, but that may change now that we're living in the age that we're living in. I don't know, I don't really do a lot. I live on a lake, and I take the kayak out in the summer, and I have just about everything I need right there. My kids are about forty-five minutes away, so I see them quite a bit, and the grandkids. But to say I bowl or anything like that, I don't. I just--

[00:27:47] **ALISON:** You enjoy your retirement.

[00:27:49] **MARY:** Yeah, and [sighs] like I was trying to tell some of the people down at the hall last Monday at the meeting, is that's my family. This is what I do. This is what I do. I don't have a husband to do things with. I don't have my grandkids living with me or that close, you know, and plus, they're getting older, they're in school, and they're involved in things. So this pension club, this is what I do.

[00:28:16] **ALISON:** And it's your way of giving back, because that's a volunteer position.

[00:28:20] **MARY:** Yes, it's all volunteer. Yes, it is, because this union has given me everything, gave me a great job, gave me how my benefits are to die for. It gave my son a job. It gave two grandsons already, and one is about thirty away from getting into the pool of jobs, Jeff Pierce. You know Jeff Pierce, my grandson, kind of, and Jeff Shane.

[00:28:50] **ALISON:** That's right, yeah.

[00:28:52] **MARY:** And then Elizabeth, you know, everybody knows Elizabeth. I heard she's doing okay.

[00:28:59] **ALISON:** I heard she's a good crane operator, yeah. So you have a you have a lot of family and legacy now. How many total years did you have on the job?

[00:29:09] **MARY:** Thirty.

[00:29:10] **ALISON:** Thirty, wow.

[00:29:12] **MARY:** And I retired early for disability, but it's a good thing because Bill passed away three years after I retired, so I had three years with him.

[00:29:21] **ALISON:** Oh, nice, nice. Looking back-- and, I mean, looking back, you're so involved with the pensioners, but what did all of it mean to you, everything that you accomplished with the union?

[00:29:39] **MARY:** It just, I mean it just-- if you want to do something, you just do it. I mean, I don't know-- when people tell me no, it's just-- it's not really a challenge, but it's just like, now do I want to or not? You know, it's my choice, not yours. And you know, this union, like I said before, there's so many different jobs, so many different things to do, that you will excel in something. You will be the best at something, you know, or near the best. So, I mean, like Elizabeth, it might be the crane. Me, it was dispatching.

[00:30:28] **ALISON:** Yeah. If you could have-- if you could change anything, what would you have changed?

[00:30:40] **MARY:** Being more open to the women. I mean, even now, so what have we got? One woman dispatcher? And I know women can do that job way better than those guys can. [laughs] I know that they can, but you still have that good old boys club, that barrier to get through. I am so-- Sarah, right? I'm so glad that she broke that barrier, because I told her before, I says, "You're where I wanted to be." But I think just that and, you know, it was a different time back then. Now, I'm not on the waterfront, I'm not working, I don't see what's going on between the men and women on the waterfront. I know there probably are some women that don't get along with the men, and there's some men that don't get along with the women, but the waterfront is so big, you don't have to work with those people.

[00:31:36] **ALISON:** Yeah, yep. Was there something that perhaps at the time was problematic or troublesome that you wanted to change then, and looking back now, it happened the way it should have, and you wouldn't change it? A struggle that was worth it?

[00:31:59] **MARY:** Well, I don't know if this is the right answer or not, but I know with all the equipment, until I got to the strat, I had to learn on my own. No training. No training for bulk, no training for semi, no training whatsoever. You just did it. And I think training maybe back then, at least for semi, more people, more of the women would have done it. But I don't know.

[00:32:38] **ALISON:** Who helped you the most along the way?

[00:32:45] **MARY:** There's not one right answer for that. You know, because I just-- all the guys. I mean, I can't complain about the guys. I really can't. I mean, there were a few that-- I'm lashing on a Matson ship, some-- I can't even remember his name-- he didn't want to work with a woman. Well, here I am, you know. So he starts throwing lashing bars and everything. I just got down and went and sat in the ropes in the very front of the bow, and the boss found me. He says, "What are you doing?" I says, "Well, it's too dangerous in there. I'm not gonna go in there when he's throwing their shit around." Okay, boss went back and told him, "You got it." So he had to lash the whole day while I sat on the ropes in the front. And it just, you know, "Okay, you don't want to work with me. Fine, I won't work with you, but I'm not quitting. I'm not gonna get paid right here, and I will get it." If the boss had told me to get back up there, I would have, but I would have got have gotten down again if he had started all that shit again.

[00:33:46] **ALISON:** Was that treatment normal?

[00:33:48] **MARY:** No, it was this one particular, he didn't like women at all, and I think the boss might have put us together just because he knew.

[00:33:57] **ALISON:** Oh, did his views ever change?

[00:34:02] **MARY:** He transferred to LA [Los Angeles], so I don't know. I guess he's a nice guy now, I hear once in a while things that are, you know, and he's a good union person.

[00:34:16] **ALISON:** Did anything surprise you along the way about either the union or humanity in general?

[00:34:23] **MARY:** Well, what I like about this union is sister and brotherhood. That is my family down there. I am closer to the people down there than my sisters. It used to be the other way around, but it's not now. And even though I still see my sisters, I see my my brothers, but that's my family down there at Local 19. Those are the people that I say I grew up with. Because when I started, I mean, I drank a tab for breakfast and smoked one cigarette on the way into work, and then I become a longshoreman and tried to be an alcoholic. So it was just, you know. [laughs] But it's the people and how they embrace everybody. Everybody. I don't care what color you are, what religion you are. I mean, sitting next to Joe Toro. [laughs] You know, but I love the man.

[00:35:36] **ALISON:** You find ways to have things in common, and so it really does unite.

[00:35:41] **MARY:** It is, it's a sister and brotherhood that is like family.

[00:35:48] **ALISON:** It is. What's the best piece of advice you ever received and from whom?

[00:36:03] **MARY:** Hmm, that's a hard one. Well, I can give you an example. I had mentioned Wes Young already. Well, when we first started, I used to get sacks of like flour, bulgur, whatever, when the Fisher's Flour Mill was open. And of course, that was a big joke for the dispatchers, always have the women do the Fisher's. So we get down there. Well, I'm with Wes and Wes is a worker. He is hard worker, and he's a strong little guy. I picked the sack up and I'd throw it, and it wouldn't go on right, so I'd go over and straighten it out. "God damnit, Mary, you pick that thing up and you throw it one time. That's it." I mean, he was on my ass the whole time, but thank God he was, because I learned how to throw sacks. I mean, you don't, you wouldn't get anything loaded if

you threw it and then had to go and straighten it up because you're building a bulkhead. And I thank Wes for that, for being, you know, on my ass the whole time, because if he hadn't been, nobody would have wanted to work with me.

[00:37:24] **ALISON:** And he wasn't doing--

[00:37:26] **MARY:** No, he wasn't.

[00:37:26] **ALISON:** He was doing it to help.

[00:37:28] **MARY:** Yeah, yeah. But, you know, it sounded nasty, but I didn't take it that way. I just took it as, "Okay, Mary, get it together. This is where you can't straighten things out. If it's crooked, it's crooked."

[00:37:41] **ALISON:** Kind of the language of the waterfront, where people speak like that, then you listen more, right? What would your piece of advice be to the next people, women or otherwise?

[00:37:53] **MARY:** Well, especially the women, just pull up your big girl panties and just do it. If you want to do it, just do it. You know, it may take you a little longer, like me, I never got into the crane. My body was-- I had to transfer because my body couldn't take it anymore, and I couldn't even see the crane. Of course, they just started training the '80 pool. But just do it. Just get in there and do it. I mean, if it's hard, then try something else.

[00:38:28] **ALISON:** And last question, if generalized or specifically, favorite memory?

[00:38:38] **MARY:** I don't know if I can say that on camera. [laughs] It's how I met my husband.

[00:38:45] **ALISON:** Okay, nice. Well, thank you.